

# Parks & Recreation

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## Tennis, Anyone?

The U.S. Tennis Association offers guidelines for safely reopening tennis facilities

By Victoria Chiesa

As individual states and local communities begin to reopen on the heels of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the U.S. populace will be particularly eager to return to some form of physical activity and social engagement. They will want to be active, and to, once again, spend time with friends and family. Tennis is one sport that is particularly well-positioned to satisfy those desires, as it requires no direct physical contact and, when played within specific guidelines, can be played both safely and enjoyably. For those reasons, tennis is primed to serve a central role in the recovery of communities across the United States.

Indeed, tennis figures as the ultimate return sport. The U.S. Tennis Association has outlined specific guidelines for both players and facilities that, when followed correctly and in conjunction with local, regional and federal regulations from government and health agencies, will create a safe and fun experience for all.

### Keeping the Sports Community Safe

Because tennis is played in a variety of venues across the United States, from local parks courts to private facilities, it is imperative that teaching professionals, coaches, facility administrators, and park and recreation managers all commit to playing an important role in

keeping the sports community safe at all levels. Though staffing capabilities may vary, those involved should, nonetheless, be both proactive and diligent in providing a clean environment, adhering to sanitary practices, planning activities, storing and distributing equipment, and communicating their plan of action to staff and patrons.

At the start, programming should be limited to activities, such as casual court rental, one-on-one coaching, small groups and private lessons. Staff must wear masks or “like in kind” and gloves when checking in players and should wash their hands and gloves often and after touching items. Teaching professionals for structured programming should be assigned to specific courts and, if possible, specific days and times. When booking courts for play, staff should stagger sessions to create a buffer that will allow for the proper disinfecting of courts and other areas. It is encouraged that every other court be used, where possible, to further promote physical distancing. Capturing accurate, complete information upon reservation is a must — in the event that proper health authorities need to trace

who has been on-site.

At all facilities, all surfaces — such as counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures and toilets — should be cleaned several times a day while wearing disposable gloves. The use of indoor spaces, such as locker rooms and shower areas, should be avoided, and these should be kept closed whenever possible. Court gates should be left open, while stair rails should be wrapped with caution tape to discourage touching, or else should be wiped down every hour.

On court, scoreboards and similar devices should be removed from nets, and disinfectant soap, hand sanitizers or wipes should be available for participants. Players should be discouraged from handling balls and other equipment during lessons — instead, the coach or instructor should handle these items and work closely with staff to ensure proper disinfection. Using new balls regularly is highly encouraged, as is restricting balls to a particular group, court or day of the week and labeling them with a permanent marker. Although there is no specific evidence that tennis balls can spread COVID-19, contamination by respiratory droplets from an infected person can potentially survive on hard surfaces for up to three days.

By taking precautions to help keep all participants safe, you’re ensuring that tennis not only will return to courts all across the country, but will again thrive there. 🌿

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